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OLD GOOSEBERRY;

A Farce in One Act.

By T. J. WILLIAMS.



BOSTON:
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OLD GOOSEBERRY!

A Farce.

BY

THOS. J. WILLIAMS, Esq.,

(Member of the Dramatic Authors' Society.)

*Author of Jack's Delight, An Ugly Customer, Nursey Chickweed, On and Off,
A Race for a Widow, I've Written to Brown, Peace and Quiet,
Pipkin's Rustic Retreat, Tweedleton's Tail-Coat, My Turn
Next, Dandelion's Dodges, etc., etc.*



BOSTON:

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149 WASHINGTON STREET.
1870.

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✓



Miss Fizzington Corker

OLD GOOSEBERRY.

CHARACTERS.

Royal Olympic, London, 1880.

Mr. Fizzington Corker, a retired Wine
Merchant—character part, ... Mr. J. Irving.
Simon Snapshot, a "Sportsman" from
Town, ... Mr. Geo. Elliott.
A Gardener, ... Mr. Franks.
A Gamekeeper, ... Mr. A. Brown.
Laura, Corker's Daughter, ... Miss M. Montgomery.
Matty, a "Discontented" Housemaid, . Miss A. Thomson.

SCENE.—Mr. Fizzington Corker's Country Villa.

TIME.—Present Day.

COSTUMES.

Corker.—Peculiar dressing-gown; scarlet smoking-cap, etc.
Snapshot.—Exaggerated "Cockney sportsman" make-up;
jacket; knickerbockers; felt hat; pouch; gun, etc.
Laura.—Elegant morning toilet.
Matty.—Smart housemaid's dress.

OLD GOOSEBERRY.



SCENE. — *A ground floor apartment opening at back on a garden. — Two doors, L. — R. (second wing), a large French window opening on the ground. — At back a sideboard, over which are suspended a gun, and a speaking-trumpet — L., towards front of stage, a table on which are writing paper, pens, etc. — R., a sofa, in front of which is a little table, whereupon are placed a work-basket, etc., etc.*

LAURA discovered seated near table, reading.

Laura. (Disconsolately.) Dear me, what a long, dreary day this is, to be sure! — and what a stupid book into the bargain! I've done nothing but yawn for the last half-hour.

Enter MATTY, L., with letter.

(Listlessly.) Well, Matty, what do you want?

Matty. Please, miss, I was a-looking for your pa, miss; here's a letter for him. *(Places letter on table.)*

Laura. Letter, indeed! The postman is the only visitor we ever receive, — and he wouldn't be allowed to knock at the door, if there were any chance of his wanting to come in.

Matty. Yes, miss, ever since your pa caught cold, and went stone deaf, — three years ago, — he won't allow no wisitors whatsumdever; he says conversation aren't o' no use, when you can't hear what people say.

Laura. (Pettishly.) I declare, I can endure this tedious, humdrum life no longer!

Matty. (Discontentedly.) I can't abide it no longer myself, miss, — it's that dismal and dispiritin', I feels like a wet blanket a-walkin' about in a November fog! And then, miss, let me tell you, it's no treat to have to holloa and vociferate with all your might-and main to make master hear, I declare, miss, my throat is like a nutmeg-grater, from continually exaggeratin' my vocal organs!

Laura. (Laughing.) Ha! ha! ha!

Matty. (Continuing.) My voice won't last another fortnight. Why, I spends half my wages in voice lozenges, just to counter-irritate the hoarseness, and then, miss, you know, your pa's such an awful ill-tempered gen'l'man! Why, when he was in the

wine trade everybody called him "Old Gooseberry," — first of all, because he sold such bad champagne; and secondly, he was such a crusty old customer!

Laura. I confess, Matty, the prospect is not very pleasant for us. (*Sighing.*) Ah, Matty, how I long to get married and drive a pony-chaise!

Matty. (*Rapturously.*) So do I, miss!

Laura. (*Continuing.*) But, unfortunately, there's no prospect of anything half so delightful; my father seems determined that I should *never* get married! Half-a-dozen young fellows — very nice young fellows too — have proposed for me; — he has refused them all! (*Irritably.*) He always says, "This is not the son-in-law I so long have sighed for!"

Matty. (*Contemptuously.*) "Sighed for," indeed! I wonder what he'd have, I should like to know?

Laura. (*In despairing accents.*) Ah! Matty, no one is ever likely to propose for me again; they know full well that 'tis only subjecting themselves to rude refusals, and yet (*Thoughtfully*) there was a young man I met at that party in town, at Mrs. Fluffington's — a rather eccentric, but very agreeable young man.

Matty. (*Stily.*) Ah! you've told me a great many times about that young man, miss. I'm inclined to think, miss, that if ever he was to pop, it wouldn't be *you*, miss, as would refuse him. (*Suddenly looking off.*) Oh, goodness gracious, here comes master! Now, where the dickens have I put his letter? Ah, here it is! (*Takes it from table.*)

Enter MR. FIZZINGTON CORKER at back, C., walking very slowly, holding in his hand a book, in the perusal of which he is absorbed.

—He is eccentrically attired in a long dressing-gown, bright red smoking-cap, etc.

Corker. (*Reading.*) "On deafness! Deafness consists in the inability to hear." (*Speaking irritably.*) Well, I could have told him that myself. (*Reading.*) "Deafness is one of the most annoying infirmities to which the human race is liable, — not only to one's self, but to other people." (*Speaking.*) Now that I call a very insulting remark.

Matty. (*Advancing, and raising her voice.*) Please, sir, here's a letter! (*CORKER takes no notice, — MATTY pops letter under his nose, shouting.*) Letter!

Corker. (*Starting.*) Letter! — eh, eh! a-a-I flatter myself I know what a letter is; it isn't because I'm deaf that I can't see, is it? (*Opens letter and reads.*)

Laura. (*Aside.*) Another proposal by post, I dare say; if I could only get a peep. (*Stealthily approaches her father, and endeavors to look over his shoulders.*)

Matty. Oh, never mind, miss, he's sure to read it out loud; as he can't hear what he's a-saying, he thinks he's a-reading to hisself.

Corker. (Who has meanwhile put on his spectacles and opened letter, — beginning to read.) Let's see, now; let's see. *(Suddenly turning round, and perceiving his daughter.)* Aha, Miss Inquisitive, always peeping and prying! No, no! this letter is marked private and confidential; no one must know a word of its contents but myself. *(Crosses to L., and reads aloud in a most remarkably distinct voice.)* "Dear Corker, — I have discovered an eligible match for your daughter; young, handsome, and not destitute of the needful."

Matty. (Nudging LAURA.) That's what master calls private and confidential.

Laura. (Aside, eagerly.) Now who can this be, I wonder?

Corker. (After reading letter.) Hum! ha! "Young, handsome —" Yes, yes, that's all very fine; but this is not the son-in-law I so long have sighed for.

Matty. (Nudging LAURA.) There he goes again, miss.

Laura. (Impatiently.) I declare I cannot endure it any longer! I shall elope with a haymaker — I know I shall!

Matty. (Endeavoring to calm her.) Haymaker, miss? I'm that melancholy, I'd marry a knife-grinder!

Laura. (Flying into a violent tantrum, unseen, of course, by her father.) I tell you, Matty, I cannot endure this lonesome existence any longer. I will get married and drive a pony-chaise, — I'm determined I will! *(Exit, L., angrily.)*

Matty. (Aside, indignantly.) She shall get married, and drive a pony-chaise; I'm determined she shall! I declare if it aint dreadful, that a nice young person — I may say two nice young persons — should be compelled to vegetate in this here lonesome soltlood! *(Sighing.)* Heigho! Howsumever, I s'pose I must go and fill that there chaney wase with fresh flowers. *(Walks up, takes flower-vase off sideboard, and exit at back into garden.)*

Corker. (Who has meanwhile continued to read his book, aloud.) "Deafness is attended with many disadvantages." *(Speaking.)* So it is; and yet it has its advantages too. When my late wife, who was an awful temper, used to blow me up, I couldn't hear a word she said; now that I call a decided advantage! *(Chuckling.)* Ha! ha! a very decided advantage! *(Mysteriously.)* I haven't told my daughter; but I am daily expecting a private visit from a German physician of great celebrity, who has undertaken to cure my deafness. However, in the mean time, the question suggests itself, What am I going to have for dinner? I do believe the loss of hearing sharpens one's appetite, for, ever since I became deaf, I have been doubly solicitous about my meals. *(Shouting.)* Ma-a-tty!

Re-enter, during last words, MATTY, at back, with flower-vase, filled with flowers.

Matty. (Vexed.) There he is, a-hollarin' agin! I declare, there aint a moment's peace. *(Stumbles, and lets fall vase, which breaks with a tremendous crash.)* Well, I never!

Corker. (*Quietly looking up from his book.*) How the flies are buzzing to-day, to be sure!

Matty. (*Picking up pieces of china and putting them in her apron.—Aside.*) Master aint heard nothing; it's quite a pleasure to smash the crockery in this establishment.

Corker. (*Getting impatient—calling.*) Mat—ty!

Matty. (*Aside, sulkily.*) Holler away, old boy! I aren't a going to answer till it suits my own convenience. (*Walks to window, R.2E., pushes it opens, and throws pieces out into garden.*) That little matter's settled.

Corker. (*Getting very angry.*) Mat—ty! (*Irritably.*) Where the deuce is that Matty? (*Starts up.*) Why, there she is, looking out into the garden. (*Approaching her, and roaring in her ear.*) Matty!

Matty. (*Who has not seen him approach—starting violently,—angrily.*) Lah, how the old curmudgeon made me jump! (*Coming forward—saucily.*) What do you want now, you everlasting old worrit?

Corker. (*Looking at MATTY—quietly.*) I wonder what that girl's saying to herself? I dare say she's saying how fond she is of her dear old master; but let me see now—(*Cogitating unctuously*) now let me see, what should I like for dinner to-day? Ah, a nice pheasant, with parsnips and potatoes, and pig's cheek, with boiled beans and broccoli-sprouts. (*To MATTY, bawling.*) Now then, Matty, touching dinner, I should like—

Matty. (*Who has, of course, overheard, bawling into his ear.*) A nice pheasant, with parsnips and potatoes, and pig's cheek, with boiled beans and brokkilo-sprouts!

Corker. (*Aside, astounded.*) It's wonderful! it's marvellous! the girl seems positively to know what I'm *thinking* about! I do believe she's a sort of a witch; I declare, I feel half afraid of her! (*Turning to her.*) Matty, I really must leave you something in my will. (*Knowingly.*) I won't say how much.

Matty. (*Aside, slyly.*) I knows how much; it's £50! I've heard him *think* it half-a-dozen times! (*Indignantly.*) If it wasn't for my 'spectations, catch me stopping in a place where I have to holler and beller all day long, like the captain of a penny steamer in a hurricane! (*Great noise heard outside, R., shouts of "Stop him! stop him!" etc., etc.—MATTY surprised.*) Why, what's up now? (*Runs to window, R.—Loud report of gun heard outside.*)

Corker. (*Directly gunshot is heard, looking up.*) What a cold that girl has got, to be sure! (*Second report of gun.*) There she goes—sneezing again!

Matty. (*At window, eagerly.*) Why, I declare if it aint a poacher, and they're a-pursuin' on him over master's grounds! (*Bawling.*) Hi! there he goes round the gravel-walk! (*To CORKER, bawling.*) Here, please, sir—jest look here, sir!

Corker. (*Jumping up, and running to window.*) Why, what's the matter?

Matty. (*Loudly, in great excitement.*) Please, sir, it's a poacher

as is a-runnin' all over our jinny-raniums and our row-de-dow-de-dan-drums! (*Crash of glass heard outside.*) Oh! gracious goodness! there goes the cawkumber frames! (*Renewed cries of "Stop him! stop him!"—Continued shouting, etc.*)

Corker. (*Greatly excited.*) Eh! what! (*At window.*) I see him—I see him! the gamekeepers are after him. Ah! he dodges down the gravel-walk. Ho! he's dashing into the hot-house! (*Waxing valiant.*) To arms! Matty; to arms! (*Jumps upon chair and gets down gun from over sideboard.*) I'll perforate the scoundrel!—I'll riddle him from head to foot!

Matty. (*Intensely interested.*) So will I—so will I! (*Seizes broom from corner of room, and flourishes it wildly.*) I'll settle the wagabond! (*Strikes attitude.*)

Corker. (*With gun.*) The outrage calls aloud for instant annihilation!—follow me, Matty, follow me!

(*Exit, R., through window.*)

Matty. (*Flourishing broom.*) We'll settle his little business for him! (*Highly excited.*) I—I—I declare a little bit of a scrimmage is quite a treat in this here dissoloot seclusion!

(*Exit hurriedly, R., through window into garden.—Continued noise and crashing outside; after a few moments' interval, enter at back, C., SIMON SNAPSHOT; he is attired in the extremity of "Cockney Sportsmanism," has an eye-glass in his eye, and a leather-pouch slung over his shoulders, jacket, knickerbockers, etc.—He carries a gun, on the trigger of which his finger is placed as though ready to fire.*)

Snap. (*Looking eagerly round room.*) That rabbit must have crept in here; I distinctly saw him turn to the left; it was a very peculiar rabbit, with a white tail, and a brown spot on his black forehead—No! (*Correcting himself.*) He had got a brown tail, and a white spot on his black forehead. I shall know him again! (*Walks stealthily round room, striking, ever and anon, a burlesque sporting attitude; looks under table, sofa, etc.*) Now, where can the aggravating animal have got to? I do believe that's a supernatural rabbit!—a phantom bunny! I never had such a dance in my life; but when Sam Snapshot comes out for a day's shooting, he's not the sort of fellow to be bamboozled by a bunny! I've chivied that quadruped about from one field to another—over hedges, ditches, stiles, and fences—for the last two hours, without ever being able to get a fair pop at him; he was always too near, or too far—clean out of sight, or just under my nose! I had given him up as a bad job, and was trudging along, thinking of the lovely little creature in the pink tarlatan, whose acquaintance I made the other night at Mrs. Fluffington's hop, when suddenly I perceived bunny quietly surmounting a quickset hedge—bang!—not a bit of it—off goes bunny! (*Illustrating bombastically.*) I take the hedge in one terrific bound, and down I come on the shoulders of a couple of gamekeepers, who were discussing a snack of bread and cheese beneath the verdant shade! (*With illustrative gestures.*) Away go I, away go they, and away goes the bread and cheese!

Bunny makes for an ornamental conservatory — I give chase, and here I am! (*Wiping his face with handkerchief.*) And here I'm convinced is bunny! Sam Snapshot's reputation as a "shot" depends upon his "bagging" that animal. He had got a black tail with a white spot on his *brown* forehead. (*Correcting himself.*) No! it was a brown tail with a black spot on his *white* forehead — no! (*Puzzled.*) Anyhow, I shall know him again. (*Loud noise recommences outside; loud shouts of "Here he is!" etc., etc.*) Holloa! here's the "hue and cry" again — I'm off! (*Rushes to door at back, but finds himself stopped by CORKER, who enters, followed by gardener.*)

Corker. (*In a stentorian voice.*) Aha! (*Presents gun at SNAPSHOT.*)

Snap. (*Alarmed.*) Halloa! (*Rushes to door, R.2.E., where he is met by MATTY with broom.*)

Matty. (*Flourishing broom.*) Not if I knows it, young man!

Snap. (*In increasing alarm.*) An entire tribe of natives let loose upon me! (*Rushes to door, L.1.E., when he is met by a gamekeeper.*)

Gamekeeper. (*Advancing.*) This be the man — I knows him agin!

Corker. (*Much alarmed, but striking remarkable attitudes.*) What, ho! seize him — secure him — hold him fast! (*Gardener and gamekeeper lay hold of SNAPSHOT.*)

Snap. (*Struggling.*) Here, I say, gently you know! (*While struggling, he contrives to ground his gun on the foot, first of the gardener, and then of the gamekeeper, both of whom utter a loud exclamation, and flourish one leg as though in great pain.*)

Corker. What do you mean, scoundrel, by poaching in broad daylight?

Snap. (*Aside, alarmed.*) Poaching! hang it, I never thought of that; I'm the wrong side of that quickset hedge! Here's a pretty fix! Here have I been actually *poaching*, and all for an eighteen-penny rabbit, with a white forehead on a brown tail — No! I'd better be off! (*Endeavors to break away from gamekeeper, etc.*)

Corker. (*Dreadfully alarmed.*) Aha! hold him tight — a — a — I'm not at all afraid of him, but I prefer addressing him from a distance. (*Advancing cautiously to SNAPSHOT.*) How dare you pursue your nefarious calling on my grounds? Are you aware that I can have you straightway arrested — incarcerated — transported?

Snap. (*Aside, alarmed.*) Now here's a pretty treat! I shall be locked up, I know I shall!

Corker. (*Imperatively.*) What's your name?

Snap. (*More and more alarmed.* — *Aside.*) I'm afraid to open my mouth, for fear of putting my foot in it.

Matty. (*Continuing.*) Now then, young man — do you hear yourself spoke to? (*Flourishes broom near SNAPSHOT's head.*)

Snap. (*Aside.*) I wish that young woman would flourish her

domestic implement a little farther off; she appears to mistake my eyebrows for cobwebs!

Matty. Now, then, are you a-goin' to answer? (*Aloud to SNAPSHOT.*) You aren't deaf, I 'spose —

Snap. Eh! (*Aside — eagerly catching at the notion.*) "Deaf!" not a bad idea that. When you are not prepared to answer a question, the best way is to pretend not to hear it.

Corker. (*Hastily.*) What does the obdurate villain say?

Matty. (*Bawling into CORKER'S ear.*) Please, sir, he don't say nothing; but he looks werry wicious!

Corker. A harde ed ruffian evidently! (*Retreating in alarm to gamekeeper.*) Hold him tight, whatever you do! (*To SNAPSHOT.*) Explain your conduct, marauder! (*SNAPSHOT continues to make mysterious gestures, indicative of his inability to hear.*)

Matty. (*Suddenly struck by the idea.*) Please, sir, I'm a-beginning to think he's deaf too.

Corker. (*Highly interested.*) Deaf! you don't mean that? (*Approaching SNAPSHOT, and shouting with all his might.*) Now, then, young man, are you a poacher?

Snap. (*Gesticulating still more violently than before.*) Don't know what you say!

Corker. (*Looking at SNAPSHOT with an air of triumphant conviction.*) Deaf, by Jove!

Gardener and Gamekeeper. (*Looking at SNAPSHOT.*) Deaf, by gum!

Matty. (*Still more emphatically.*) Deaf, by jingo! (*Thumps broom-handle upon floor.*)

Corker. (*Turning to MATTY.*) Matty, get down the speaking-trumpet that belonged to my great-grandfather the admiral!

Matty. (*Running up, jumping upon chair, and getting down speaking-trumpet from over sideboard.*) All right, sir!

Snap. (*Alarmed. — Aside.*) His grandfather the admiral! Why, what the devil are they going to do with me?

Corker. (*Taking trumpet from MATTY, and applying it to SNAPSHOT'S ear, roaring though it with a tremendous noise.*) Are you deaf?

Snap. (*Starting violently.*) Yes! just dismissed as incurable from Bedlam. (*Hastily correcting himself.*) No, I mean the — the Licensed Victuallers' Asylum!

Corker. (*Immensely interested.*) Young, prepossessing — and dreadfully deaf! (*Joyously.*) The very son-in-law I so long have sighed for!

Matty. (*Starting.*) Well, I never!

Snap. (*Aside — astounded.*) What!

Corker. (*Contemplating SNAPSHOT approvingly.*) A remarkably nice young man, if he wasn't a poacher. (*Convinced.*) But no! he can't be a poacher; he's dressed in velvet — poachers always wear corduroy; besides, poachers are never deaf to anything except the voice of conscience and the game laws. (*To gamekeeper, etc.*) You may leave the apartment — a — a — I'll just dexterously cross-question this mysterious stranger!

(*Exeunt gardener and gamekeeper at back, making significant gestures to each other.*)

Matty. (*Astounded. — Aside repeating.*) "The very man for a son-in-law!" Well, that's a pretty notion, that is — to choose a young man for a son-in-law because he's deaf. (*Resolutely.*) But I aint going to have two on 'em in the house, and one on 'em a poacher — not if I knows it!

Corker. (*To SNAPSHOT, loudly.*) Take a chair, young man! (*SNAPSHOT is about to obey, but, remembering his assumed deafness, looks vacantly before him, and pretends not to hear. — CORKER, much interested, with serio-comic sympathy.*) Ha! ha! poor fellow — he's deaf! (*Aside, chuckling.*) How funny it seems for a man not to hear when he's spoken to! (*Shouting violently.*) Take a chair, young man! (*SNAPSHOT gazes before him with a vacant stare, and pretends not to hear.*)

Corker. (*Applying speaking-trumpet to SNAPSHOT'S ear.*) Take a chair!

Snap. (*Starting violently, and rubbing his ear.*) Dash that precious pea-shooter! (*Motioning politely to chair.*) After you, sir — after you.

Corker. (*Aside, convinced.*) Can't be a poacher; his manners are too elegant for a poacher. (*They sit down.*)

Matty. (*Aside, looking at SNAPSHOT.*) Don't like the looks on him at all. (*Walks up.*)

Corker. (*Majestically.*) I dare say, young man, you are much surprised at my forbearance in not having you immured in a gloomy dungeon. (*Applying speaking-trumpet as before.*) Eh!

Snap. (*Starting and dodging; at a loss what to say; bawling.*) Oh, yes, of course!

Corker. (*Struck by a sudden idea — jumping up.*) But stop a bit — perhaps he's married! (*Sitting down again, and shouting.*) Married or single! (*Listens eagerly for answer.*)

Snap. (*Getting rather impatient. — Aside.*) What's that to him?

Corker. (*Jumping up.*) Perhaps he has got half-a-dozen children; if he has, I'll send him to jail immediately! (*Sitting down again, and roaring through speaking-trumpet.*) Are you married?

Snap. (*Who was looking vacantly before him, starting violently, shouting.*) No! (*Aside, irritably.*) If he makes me jump again, I'll lay that wretched pea-shooter about his head; by Jove, I will!

Corker. (*Aside.*) I think he said "No." He looked as if he said "No." (*Applying speaking-trumpet as before.*) Single — eh? (*Listens for answer.*)

Snap. (*Irritably — starting and shouting.*) Yes!

Corker. (*Shouting.*) What do you say?

Snap. (*Still more loudly — impatiently.*) Yes! (*Aside, suspiciously.*) I'm beginning to think he's rather deaf himself.

Corker. (*Aside, complacently.*) He said "Yes," that last time; he looked as if he did. (*Rising, ecstatically.*) I've come

to the conclusion that he's the very man for my daughter. (Solemnly.) Young man, you've been poaching on my premises. (Affably.) You must dine with me.

Snap. (Aside, surprised.) Dine with him.

Corker. (Aside, evidently pleased at the difficulty he experiences in making SNAPSHOT hear.) What a bore it is to talk to a fellow who can't hear! (Applying speaking-trumpet and shouting.) Dine with me!

Snap. (Dodging about to avoid speaking-trumpet — bawling spasmodically.) Very good! (Aside.) I'm pins and needles from head to foot! (In evident fear of the speaking-trumpet, he moves his chair farther away from CORKER.)

Corker. (Understanding.) He agrees. (To MATTY.) Matty, lay dinner for three.

Matty. (Sulkily.) Dinner for three? Here's a treat. Extra hockipation now. Things is comin' to a pretty pass when poachers is invited to dinner, and respectable female 'ouse-maids is expected to wait on 'em.

Corker. (Aside, watching MATTY — continuing.) I wonder what that girl is saying to herself. (Aloud.) For three — do you hear?

Matty. (In her usual tone.) Yes, old curmudgeon; if it wasn't for that 'ere fifty pounds, I'd soon give this place a wide berth, that I would.

Snap. (Aside, surprised.) Queer sort of handmaiden that. Just a little disrespectful I should say.

(Exit MATTY, sulkily, L.2.E.)

Corker. (Soliloquizing.) Excellent servant that! so good-tempered — so anxious to oblige.

Snap. (Aside, surprised.) Very anxious to oblige; he must be deaf, and no mistake.

Corker. Young man, a word with you. (CORKER rises, and with mysterious gestures crosses to door, L., shuts it, looks all round room, and then returns to his seat.)

Snap. (Who is nervously watching his movements.) What the deuce is he up to? I never saw such a mysterious old buffer in all my life.

Corker. (Returning to his seat.) My dear sir, let us have a little quiet conversation. Eh! you understand? (Bawling through trumpet.) Calm and quiet.

Snap. (Dodging to avoid trumpet.) That's his notion of "calm and quiet." (Struck by a sudden idea.) I'll just plug that pea-shooter. (Takes handkerchief from his breast-pocket, and, while CORKER is looking the other way, crams handkerchief into mouth of speaking-trumpet.)

Corker. (Loudly.) I don't mind telling you that if you had been a married man, I should have had you locked up without the slightest ceremony.

Snap. (Shouting.) You're very kind, I'm sure.

Corker. (Continuing.) But, fortunately for you, you are single, sir, single! I, sir, have an only daughter, who is also single,

singularly single. I'm inclined to think that you will suit her in a singular degree.

Snap. (*Dreadfully alarmed, jumping up.*) No, I shan't! — a — I'm sure I shan't! (*Takes his hat from table, and attempts to get away.*)

Corker. (*Seizing SNAP by the arm, bawling angrily.*) Sit down, sir! You not only suit *her*, sir, but you suit *me*, sir, and that's a much more important consideration! I offer you my hand — no! I mean my daughter's hand — in marriage. Snug little marriage portion. (*Applying speaking-trumpet.*) Do you hear?

Snap. (*Shouting.*) Yes! (*Aside, reflecting.*) What's he say — snug little marriage portion? That slightly alters the case. (*Concededly.*) I'm open to a good offer. Wonder if she's deaf? Dumb, possibly, with a wooden leg or two.

Corker. (*Affably.*) Now, do you know why I've taken such a fancy to you?

Snap. (*Indicating, aside, by complacent gestures, that he no longer fears the speaking-trumpet.*) Really can't say.

Corker. (*Continuing.*) My dear sir, you may, perhaps, not have noticed — (*Suddenly, unobserved by SNAPSHOT, CORKER perceives the handkerchief protruding from the mouth of the speaking-trumpet; with a gesture indicative of surprise he removes the handkerchief, unseen by SNAPSHOT, and places it in his own pocket; he then continues.*) I was about to say, young man, you may not have noticed that I am slightly (*Bawling,*) hard of hearing!

Snap. (*Aside.*) Slightly, perhaps; just a trifle, not worth mentioning.

Corker. (*Continuing.*) Now, supposing my daughter had married an ordinary individual, in full possession of all his everyday faculties, why, they would have jabbered and gossiped together all day long, and I should never have heard a word.

Snap. (*Aside, laughing.*) Knowing old customer this!

Corker. (*Continuing.*) But with a son-in-law as deaf as you are (*Facetiously,*) — for you are *frightfully* deaf, and no mistake — to make you hear everybody will be obliged to bawl with all his might and main, and I shall be able to hear all that goes on. (*Applying trumpet — roaring.*) Don't you see?

Snap. (*Starting more violently than ever.*) Yes! (*Appears utterly astonished at the alteration in the tone of the speaking-trumpet.*) Why, he has unplugged the pea-shooter!

Corker. (*Through speaking-trumpet.*) You quite understand?

Snap. (*Dodging about on his chair, roaring.*) Yes!

Corker. (*Jovially.*) Then allow me to inform you that my daughter's yours. (*Through speaking-trumpet.*) Yours!

Snap. (*Aside, rubbing his ear.*) I'm tingling from head to foot. I'm all over sand-paper!

Enter MATTY, during last words, L.2E., with cloth, etc., which she is occupied in laying during the following scene.

Matty. (Angrily, repeating aside.) His daughter's his'n! he's been and gone and done it!

Corker. (Continuing facetiously.) Young, beautiful, sylph-like! (*Capering about and digging SNAPSHOT in the ribs with speaking-trumpet.*) Ah, you young dog, you!

Snap. (Dodging about.) O-o-oh! mind what you're about! I'm not going to be knocked about like this! (*Aside.*) Why, my ear's tingling like a coal of fire; my very hair is beginning to curl from the violence of the vibration! (*Takes hold of the tail of CORKER's dressing-gown, and attempts to ram it into the mouth of the speaking-trumpet.*)

Corker. (Imperatively.) Now, then, young man, sit down! or (*Irritably,*) I'll have you transported—you're in my power! (*Walking round SNAPSHOT, and applying speaking-trumpet to his other ear.*) Do you hear?

Snap. (Starting violently.) All right! (*Aside, shuddering.*) It's like a thunder-storm in both ears. (*They resume their seats.*)

Matty. (Looking askance at SNAPSHOT.) Well, this is a pretty treat; here am I, maid-of-all-work in a family where there are two deaffies—and one on 'em a poacher!—but I'll give notice—I aint a-going to holler away my junewile bloom no longer!

Corker. (Starting up, struck by a sudden idea.) Stop—I'll just introduce you to my daughter. (*SNAPSHOT mechanically rises.*) By the by (*Inspecting SNAPSHOT's toilet,*) you're just a little rumpled; you'd better step into my room and "titivate" a little; my daughter's very particular, and I'm determined, young man, you shall please my daughter!

Snap. (Rather bewildered.) Well, this is the most extraordinary fix a fellow ever got into—and all through a brown rabbit with a white spot on his eighteen-penny tail—No! (*Correcting himself.*) Anyhow I shall know him again, and if ever I do come across that mysterious animal, I'll serve him out—I'll blow him into infinitesimal fragments first, and make an Irish stew of him afterwards!

Corker. (Interrupting him, rather irritably.) Now, then, don't stand gesticulating there; run and titivate—a good brush up, you know—part your hair carefully in the middle, with just a little twiddle on each side. (*Bawling after him.*) You'll find a false collar on the chest of drawers; and I say! (*Bawling through speaking-trumpet.*) Put on a little pomatum! (*Facetiously.*) Ah! you young dog, you! (*Digs SNAPSHOT in the ribs with the speaking-trumpet.*)

Snap. (At R.I.E., aside, angrily.) Oh! confound that dreadful pea-shooter! If this goes on, I shall be deaf all over!

(*Exit R.I.E.*)

Corker. (Looking after SNAPSHOT, and rubbing his hands gleefully.) Deaf!—very deaf!—delightfully deaf!—excellent young man! How could I ever have mistaken him for a poacher?—the very son-in-law I so long have sighed for. I'll cause immediate inquiries to be made as to his pecuniary prospects.

That speaking-trumpet was a splendid notion; I'll buy another. (*Emphatically.*) We'll have one apiece, and then we'll have long political arguments across the table — social science discussions! Oh, 'twill be jolly — very jolly!

Enter MATTY, L.2E.

(*Suddenly perceiving MATTY.*) Halloa! what do you want?

Matty. (Bawling, sulkily.) Please, sir, there's a mysterious, lookin' gent with a fur collar and velvet cuffs.

Corker. (Surprised.) Velvet cuffs!

Matty. (Loudly.) Yes, sir, he looks for all the world like the Wandering Jew in his Sunday clothes, sir.

Corker. (Surprised.) The Wandering Jew in his Sunday clothes! — perhaps it's the water-rates?

Matty. (Bawling.) No, sir, it aint the water-rates, — here's his card, sir! — (*Gives card.*)

Corker. (Taking card, amazed.) Eh! What! can I believe my eyes? Where is he? Where is he?

Matty. (Bawling.) He's in the study, sir.

Corker. (In terrific excitement.) In the study, — yes! Good-gracious me, it is — it is! I fly — the eventful moment has come at last. I wonder what he'll do to me, — I wonder what he'll do to me!

(*Exit hastily, L. 2E., in great excitement.*)

Matty. (Looking after CORKER, tapping forehead.) I do believe Mr. Fizzington Corker is a going cracked, and that's just about the size of it.

Enter LAURA, L.1E.

Laura. (Looking off, L.) Why, there's papa actually running. What is the matter with him to-day?

Matty. (Contemptuously.) Why he's diskivered the son-in-law he's been so long a-sighing for.

Laura. (Surprised.) Indeed! Where is he?

Matty. (Points L.) He's in that there room, miss, — a-titi-watin.

Laura. (Eagerly.) In that room! What's he like? Oh, tell me, Matty, tell me.

Matty. (Contemptuously.) What's he like, miss? Why, he's like a horful sag — ga — rifice! that's what he's like.

Laura. (Surprised.) An awful sacrifice!

Matty. (Emphatically.) Yes, miss. (*Impressively.*) I always thought your pa about as deaf a gent as ever I come nigh; but, compared to *this* joker — (*Points off*) — your pa would hear the grass grow, or a wax doll whisper.

Laura. (Astounded.) How very dreadful! Pa must indeed be out of his mind. (*Pacing to and fro angrily.*) But no matter. After refusing so many eligible matches, I will not suffer myself to be positively thrown away in this manner.

Matty. (Indignantly.) In course not, miss. If I was you,

miss, I'd settle this little business off hand. Here, miss, I'll tell the puppy you want to speak to him. (*Running to R.I.E., and calling.*) Hi! Mr. What's-your-name! (*Shouting.*) Here's some 'un wishes to see you!

Enter SAM SNAPSHOT from room R.I.E., with a hair-brush in each hand, in the act of brushing his hair.

Snap. (*As he enters, brushing his hair violently.*) Wishes to see me? (*Perceiving LAURA, and immediately recognizing her.*) What do I behold? (*Strikes tremendous attitude, with a brush in each hand.*)

Laura. (*Amazed.*) Can I believe my eyes?

Snap. (*Astounded.*) My distracting little partner in the pink.

Laura. The young man who was so attentive to me at Mrs. Fluffington's.

Matty. (*Surprised,—aside.*) Why, they knows one another.

Laura. (*To MATTY.*) But surely *this* gentleman isn't deaf?

Snap. Deaf!—no! (*Recollecting himself.*) Eh!—that's to say—yes, he is deaf—very deaf,—distractingly deaf. (*Aside.*) Now here's a pretty fix. (*In his excessive bewilderment, he mechanically recommences violently brushing his hair.*)

Laura. (*To MATTY, earnestly.*) Why, when I met him at Mrs. Fluffington's, he heard with the utmost distinctness.

Snap. (*Aside.*) Eh! of course I did. Now, how am I to get out of this? (*Aloud,—stammering.*) You naturally wonder how the fearful circumstance occurred? A—a—(*Aside—puzzled.*) How did the fearful circumstance occur? (*Aloud, pathetically, waving hair-brushes.*) One night, in the solemn stillness of the midnight hour—when nature's self was hushed in calm repose—a—a—(*Striking a terrific attitude*) an enormous gas factory suddenly exploded—a—a—just round the corner.

Laura. (*Starting.*) Good-gracious!

Snap. (*Continuing tragically, striking terrific attitudes, and waving brushes wildly.*) Detonation, irritation, agitation, inflammation, disorganization! (*Clasping his hands tragically.*) When I awoke (*Gesticulating wildly*) I was deaf!

Laura. (*Deeply interested.*) Deaf! how dreadful!

Snap. (*Hastily.*) Deaf as regards the general multitude; but there are voices, sweet, gentle, silvery voices, which, even now, I am enabled to hear. (*Insinuatingly.*) If you were to address me, I almost fancy I could understand a word here and there.

Laura. (*Deeply interested,—pathetically.*) You think so?

Snap. (*Repeating after her mechanically, and imitating her with burlesque pathos.*) You think so?

Laura. (*Delighted.*) He can hear what I say.

Matty. (*Chuffy.*) Don't believe him, miss, it's all gammon—them deafies is plaguy artful.

Snap. (*Aside, striking a pugilistic attitude, and squaring up with brushes angrily.*) Oh, if that girl was only a Jeames, or a Johnny, or even a buttons!

Laura. (Sadly.) I fear you are right, Matty. Unhappy young man, — so young, so deaf, and yet so deeply devoted to me. *(Resolutely.)* But marry a deaf husband, never! *(Aside, going.)* I'll retire to my room and have a good cry, that I will.

(Exit hastily, L. 2E.)

Snap. (Following her.) Stay, distracting creature, stay! *(Burlesque emotion.)* She's gone — the distracting creature's gone!

Matty. (Imagining of course that SNAP cannot hear her.) Yes, she's gone, and the sooner you're gone too, the better, Mr. Jack o'dandy!

Snap. (Starting angrily.) Jack o'dandy! *(Forgetting his assumed deafness.)* I tell you what it is, you know — *(Advances sternly upon MATTY.)*

Matty. (Starting.) Eh? Why, he can hear. *(Alarmed.)* He arn't deaf at all.

Snap. (Following up MATTY — indignantly.) Deaf! no! But if you reveal my secret, I'll inform Mr. Corker of the pretty way in which you speak to him — I heard you.

Matty. (Alarmed — imploringly.) Please, sir, don't tell o' me, sir. You'll cut me out o' the fifty pounds as how master has promised me in his will. *(Whimpering and applying corner of her apron to her eyes.)* I aint a bad-hearted girl; but I'm nat'rally plain-spoken.

Snap. (Reprovingly.) Oh, that's it. I should almost advise you to cultivate a little ornamental insincerity for the future.

Matty. (Altering her manner.) But please, sir, if you really has got all your senses about you, I ain't never no dijections to your marrying my young missus.

Snap. Come, that's kind of you, certainly. (Bell heard in LAURA's room, L.)

Matty. Holloa! that's my young missus's bell. (Eagerly.) I'll run and tell her as how it was all a make-believe. But, I say, sir, you must look out precious sharp if you means to keep up the joke, for he's a rare knowing old gen'l'man, is Old Gooseberry.

Snap. I'll look out. To win a smile — a single smile from your lovely mistress (Burlesque tragedy), I'd stand without winking, if they were to set off a couple of powder magazines — One on each side of me! (Strikes attitude with brushes; bell heard in LAURA's room.)

Matty. (Starting.) Coming! coming! *(Exit, running, L.)*

Snap. (Aside — ruminating with a puzzled expression.) Well, fairy tales are a fool to this. *(Vacantly.)* A peculiarly marked rabbit — value eighteen-pence — has actually led me to the residence of my lovely little partner in the pink tarlatan. *(Admiringly.)* Distracting little creature! to think that she should turn out to be the daughter of this mysterious old buffer, with the unpleasantly penetrating pea-shooter. *(Suddenly perceiving trumpet, which CORKER has laid on table.)* Why, there is the pea-shooter. *(Taking it up.)* I'll take this instrument of

torture, and shy it over the garden wall; and if I come across that eighteen-penny brown with the white black — (*Correcting himself.*) No, bother the bunny! he's utterly indescribable.
(*Exit hastily at back, C., with speaking-trumpet.*)

No sooner has SNAPSPOT disappeared, than re-enter CORKER, L.2E., in a state of tremendous excitement — singing, dancing, and snapping his fingers.

Corker. (*Capering about.*) Tol-de-rol-de-riddle! Tol-de-rol-de-riddle-lol-de-ray! (*Coming forward.*) What an astonishing thing is science! I can hear! I can hear! (*Taking watch from his pocket, and holding it to his ear.*) There's no mistake about it, I can hear my watch tick. (*In an ecstasy of delight, capering about the room.*) Tol-de-riddle-foi-de-riddle! etc. etc.

Enter LAURA, L.2E.

Laura. What, papa, you can hear?

Corker. (*Continuing — ecstatically.*) Marvellous operation! Cured in an instant by the skill of the wondrous German professor!

Laura. (*Delighted.*) O papa! this is indeed good news.

Corker. (*Reprovingly.*) My dear child, not so loud; you forget I am not deaf.

Laura. (*Struck by a sudden idea.*) But then, papa, he — that nice young man — might be cured too. (*Eagerly.*) O papa! how delightful it would be.

Corker. (*With grave remonstrance.*) For goodness' sake! don't shout so. I'm not deaf, I tell you.

Laura. (*Vehemently.*) But, papa —

Corker. (*Putting his hands to his ears.*) There you go again.

Laura. (*Lowering her voice.*) Forgive me — mere force of habit. (*Archly.*) Well — you know — I've seen him.

Corker. Him! Who? (*Aside — complacently.*) She said "him!" What a delightful thing it is to have full possession of all one's faculties.

Laura. (*Archly.*) The young man you have selected for my future husband.

Corker. (*Repeating in ecstasies of delight.*) "Future husband!" How distinctly I hear everything, to be sure! (*Pulls out watch again and applies it to his ear.*)

Laura. (*Ingenuously — continuing.*) I didn't like the notion at all at first; in fact, I went to my room and had a good cry.

Corker. (*Emphatically.*) Then don't cry any more. I've altered my mind.

Laura. (*Alarmed.*) Altered your mind, papa!

Corker. (*Aside, emphatically.*) Now that I can hear, I don't want a deaf son-in-law. (*Aloud.*) Do you think that Fizzington Corker would confer his daughter's hand upon a young petrification who can't hear two words that are said to

him? (*With immense resolution.*) Not if Fizzington Corker knows it!

Laura. (*Imploringly.*) But, papa, since you are cured, he might be cured too.

Corker. (*Emphatically.*) No! he is too deaf—he's utterly incurable. You might cut his head off and he wouldn't be any the better for the operation. (*Irritably.*) Don't talk to me any more about him. I was stupid enough to invite him to dinner; but I'll get rid of him, (*With serio-comic indignation.*) I'm not going to bawl myself red in the face to suit his convenience, I can tell you.

Laura. (*Losing her temper.*) Another chance gone! Another match knocked on the head.

Corker. (*Soothingly.*) Now, my dear child, don't be so impetuous. I've another husband ready to hand.

Laura. I won't have him—I declare I won't! (*Vehemently.*) I won't have anybody but Mr. Simon Snapshot—no, no, no, that I won't!

Corker. (*Stopping his ears and bawling.*) But will you listen to reason?

Laura. (*In a paroxysm of indignation.*) I'll not listen to anything! I'll either marry this young man, or I declare I'll pine away to a shadow—I'll dwindle away to a skeleton—and—I won't eat a bit of dinner! (*Turning round at door, and stamping impetuously—bawling.*) I won't! I won't! I won't!

(*Exit, in a violent tantrum, L. 2E.*)

Corker. (*Holding his ears.*) "Won't eat a bit of dinner!" Oh, what a temper! But she is just like her dear departed mother. I have not heard such a dreadful noise as that, ever since my late wife blew me up, in the middle of a thunder-storm, for upsetting the melted butter over her new silk dress. The idea of dwindling away to a skeleton for a total stranger!—a fellow who arrives like a squirrel over a quickset hedge, instead of through the front door. Besides, how do I know he isn't a poacher? Some poachers are good-looking—they're not obliged to wear corduroy. (*Significantly.*) I'll give him a dinner! Whatever the bill of fare may be, the "cold shoulder" shall form a very prominent item. (*Dinner bell rings, L.—Shouting violently.*) What the devil's that? (*Rushing about in almost tragic terror.*) What a shame it is to make a man jump so, when they know how acutely I hear everything! I declare, I thought the whole neighborhood was on fire. (*Shrill railway whistle heard, L.—Again starting violently, and running to opposite side of stage.*) What's that? (*Irritably.*) The whole world seems to be making frightful noises, because they know I can hear. (*Tremendous and prolonged smash of china heard, R.—Again starting violently.*) Ah! (*Shuddering.*) There's another! That sounded like breaking crockery. That's an expensive sound, that is. (*Writhing and wincing.*) I feel it all down my back. (*Looking off another way.*) Oh! here comes Matty with the dinner. Faithful Matty. I can fancy the delight of that attached domestic, on learning

that her master, her beloved master, has recovered his hearing. Ah! there are not many housemaids of that sort. (*Sitting down at table.*) Kind, good, devoted girl!

Enter MATTY, L.2E., carrying dinner on tray.

Matty. (As she enters.) Just capsized a dozen of soup-plates; howsume'er, it's all good for trade. (*Perceiving CORKER, imagining, of course, that he is deaf as before. — In her usual tone.*) Well, old Stick-in-the-mud, how are you getting on?

Corker. (Looking all round, intensely surprised.) She is addressing somebody as "Old Stick-in-the-mud." (*Rises and continues to look all round.*)

Matty. (Aside, laying cloth.) Now then, Grumble-gizzard, here's your dinner.

Corker. (Surprised.) "Grumble-gizzard!" There must be somebody else in the room, of whose presence I have hitherto been unconscious. (*Greatly surprised, looks under table, etc.*)

Matty. (Continuing.) If it hadn't been for that 'ere fifty survivors as you promised to leave me in your will, I shouldn't ha' been laying this here identical cloth at this here identical moment, I can tell you (*Vehemently*), you old Guy Faux, yod. (*Exit L.2E.*)

Corker. (Astounded and indignant.) "Old Guy Faux!" There's no mistake about that last epithet. The girl is alluding to me! So, so! *this* is the way I've been talked to during the temporary aberration of one of my faculties! This is the worst noise I've heard yet! (*Waxing very wroth.*) Fifty pounds, indeed! The jade shall pack out of the house. (*Very angry.*) Ungrateful slut! I'll send her spinning into the wide, wide world, without a particle of recommendation or a shred of character. I'll "Guy Faux" her!

Enter SNAPSHOT, at back.

Snap. (As he enters.) Not a glimpse of my distracting little partner in the pink. (*Perceiving cloth laid.*) Halloa! dinner! that's right. How hungry I am, to be sure! I've had nothing all day, except a rabbit—forty yards off.

Corker. (Looking at SNAPSHOT, aside.) Halloa, here's young deaffy! I'm in a very bad humor, and I shall give him notice to quit instantan. Now where's my speaking-trumpet? (*Looking all about.*) Where the deuce is my speaking-trumpet?

Snap. (Watching CORKER, aside, chuckling.) The pea-shooter is at this moment in the ditch at the bottom of the garden.

Corker. (Looking about.) Matty must have got it. (*Aside, contemptuously.*) The idea of that fellow presuming to make up to my daughter. A damaged sample of inferior humanity, who requires to be bawled at through an artificial apparatus. (*Aloud to SNAPSHOT, as before, looking him full in the face, believing him, of course, to be deaf.*) I'm sorry I invited you to dinner, young ticket-of-leave.

Snap. (Aside, surprised.) Ticket of what? (Is about to reply, but remembers his assumed deafness, and with evident effort, refrains from answering.)

Corker. (Continuing emphatically.) And I trust the fare provided may disagree with you most frightfully.

Snap. (Astounded, aside.) "Disagree with me!" Why, the wind's gone round again!

Corker. (Aside, getting more and more irritable.) I've no patience, with a man who, when he's called names, isn't even aware of it! It's pitiful, it's inexcusable! I'll behave rudely to him, — I'll hurt his feelings. (Wheels arm-chair near table, motioning to arm-chair.) Sit down!

Snap. (Doubtfully.) You're very kind. (Aside.) Why, what's the matter with him now? (Is about to sit down, when CORKER draws chair away.)

Corker. No, you don't! I'll take this chair.

Snap. (Who has narrowly escaped falling, aside, surprised.) I'm inclined to think the weekly "twopence," indicative of manners, was not expended on this gentleman's education.

Corker. (Aside.) How pleasant it is to give vent to one's sentiments without reserve! (Bringing forward another very rickety chair.) Take this chair, my cockney friend; it's very hard, very rickety, and very uncomfortable. (Emphatically.) I hope it will break your neck for you.

Snap. (In increasing suspicion.) "Break my neck!" Why, just now he was insisting upon my marrying his daughter! (Speaking in his natural tone, believing the other to be deaf, with every outward semblance of politeness.) What a splendid specimen of a prize scarecrow this surly old hippopotamus would make!

Corker. (Starting, — aside, angrily.) What's he say?

Snap. (Aside.) What a comfort it is to be able to utter one's thoughts aloud! (To CORKER, as before, with the most amiable manner and gestures — looking CORKER full in the face.) A pretty hedgehog of a father-in-law you'll be!

Corker. (Aside, furious.) "Hedgehog?" Why, the puppy's calling me names, — he little thinks I can hear every word he says! (As before.) I, your father-in-law! — why, I'd sooner bestow my daughter's hand on a convicted costermonger.

Snap. (Astounded, putting down knife and fork.) What! (Aside.) If I wasn't obliged to be deaf, what a settling down I would give him! (Endeavoring to master his anger.) A — a — I'll pretend to take no notice. (Shouting.) I say, isn't your lovely daughter going to honor us with her delightful presence?

Corker. (Chuffy.) Never you mind, whether she is or not! (Helping himself.) This pheasant is as tough as an old leather apron — he shall have it all. (Puts pheasant on SNAPSHOT's plate.)

Snap. (Pushing pheasant back.) What the deuce is he about? Keep a little for yourself, old gobbleton.

Corker. (Starting, aside.) "Gobbleton!" He has called me

another name. (*Replacing pheasant on his plate.*) I'll serve him out! The parsnips are dreadfully smoked, — I'll give them to him!

Snap. (*As before — pushing plate away.*) No, you won't, you superannuated specimen of an antediluvian chimpanzee!

Corker. (*Starting, stung to the quick.*) "Chimpanzee!" I shouldn't have minded ourang-outang; but I can't stand chimpanzee! (*Furious.*) If he calls me any more names, I'll shy a plate at him!

Snap. (*Aside, losing temper, and mechanically tucking up his sleeves.*) If this elderly porcupine wasn't my Laura's father, I'd level him with his own Kidderminster.

Enter MATTY, carrying dishes, L.2E.

Corker. (*Aside.*) Ah, there's that treacherous young hussy! I'll settle accounts with her presently. (*To MATTY.*) This cockney-cormorant hasn't half finished, but take his plate away all the same. What have you got there?

Matty. (*Placing dish on table, shouting sulkily.*) Pig's cheek, with boiled beans, and brok-ki-lo-sprouts.

Corker. Beans and broccoli-sprouts! (*Struck by a sudden idea.*) I'll swamp him in vegetables. (*Taking plate with broccoli-sprouts, etc., and emptying the contents into SNAPSHOT's plate, — bawling.*) A little greens, young counter-jumper!

Snap. (*Starting up, intensely amazed.*) Will you be quiet, sir? (*Aside, offended.*) Why, I'm smothered in cabbage! I never met such an ill-mannered old brute in all my life.

Corker. (*Watching him, chuckling.*) He's offended, he'll be off soon; I'll have another dinner when he's gone. (*Struck by a sudden idea, rising.*) Stay, I'll begin to smoke, — that will start him at once! (*Crossing to sideboard to fetch cigar-case.*) I'll smoke a very strong, full-flavored Havanna — a regular knock-me-down, — and give him one of the bad 'uns I keep for my friends. (*Coming down, and presenting a very thin, and "doubtful"-looking cigar to SNAPSHOT.*) Do a weed? It's only a "cabbage" in a milder form.

Snap. (*Aside, in a tone of profound disgust.*) A penny pick-wick, by Jupiter! (*Getting up and slowly taking his coat off, as though about to pitch into CORKER.*) I can't stand this any longer! I'll forgive any amount of bullying, but I can't stand bad weeds! (*Dashes coat down on ground, and slowly squares up at CORKER.*) Corker! come on. (*Chivies CORKER up to back of stage.*)

Corker. (*Dodging to and fro, roaring.*) Mind what you're about! what are you up to? Do you want to be thrown out of window?

Snap. (*Following up CORKER, and continuing to square up at him.*) Come on!

Matty. (*Approvingly, to SNAPSHOT.*) That's right, sir; you give it to the old curmudgeon.

Corker. (Starting, aside.) What!

Matty. (Turning to CORKER, and addressing him in her usual "plain-spoken" manner.) If it wasn't for my 'spectations, I wouldn't stop in your house another minute, you uncompromisin' old slave-driver, you!

Corker. (Furious with indignation.) Wouldn't you? *(Takes a stack of plates from the table, and dashes them to the ground with a tremendous crash.)*

Matty. (Screaming wildly in terrific alarm.) A — a — ha! he can hear! he can hear!

Corker. (Furiously angry, chasing MATTY.) Walk out of my house this instant!

Snap. (Dumbfounded, aside.) Why, he's been shamming too!

Corker. (Furious — continuing.) Go! fly! begone! Take that, and that! *(Takes up potatoes from dish and shies them after MATTY.)*

Matty. (Running about horribly alarmed.) He can hear! he can hear! It's conjuring — it's conjuring! It's all along o' that ere Wandering Jew! *(Exit, running in great alarm — at back.)*

Corker. (Rushing up to back after MATTY.) Leave my house! *(Shies a final potato after her.)*

Enter LAURA, hastily, L.2E.

Laura. What on earth is the matter?

Snap. (Astounded, to LAURA.) You don't mean to say your father can hear?

Laura. (Eagerly.) Yes; a marvellous cure. Just performed.

Snap. (Disgusted.) What a pitiful advantage to take of a fellow!

Corker. (Coming down and approaching SNAPSHOT.) And now, Mr. Thing-um-bob *(Significantly pointing to door),* your train must be about due.

Laura. (Imploringly.) O pa! Don't send him away. *(Forgetting herself.)* I am so fond of him.

Snap. (Enraptured.) What! *(Striking an ecstatic attitude.)* She's fond of me? By Jove! *(Utterly overcome, drops backwards into CORKER'S arms.)*

Corker. (Shouting.) Get up, confound you! get up. *(Pushing him forward.)*

Laura. (Hiding her face in her hands.) I forgot he could hear.

Corker. (Starting.) He can hear! *(To SNAPSHOT.)* Why, who cured you?

Snap. (Indignantly.) Cured me? I'm not a Yorkshire ham — I didn't require curing.

Corker. Do you mean to tell me you weren't really deaf?

Snap. Deaf! Not a bit of it. Just ask me a moderately difficult conundrum.

Corker. (Utterly disgusted.) The base impostor!

Snap. (*Continuing.*) Impostor! That's a good joke. You never told me you were cured.

Corker. (*Relapsing into an involuntary smile.*) Both deaf—and both pretending to hear—no, both hearing to pretend—(*Puzzled.*) No—hang me if I know how it was! (*Laughing loudly.*) Ha, ha, ha! very facetious—very facetious. (*Digging SNAPSHOT in the ribs.*)

Enter meanwhile, MATTY, at back.

Snap. (*Genially.*) Ha, ha, ha! How all this will amuse my old uncle, Benjamin Beeswing, of Barbican!

Corker. (*Starting violently.*) Beeswing! is Benjamin Beeswing, of Barbican, your uncle?

Snap. To be sure he is. I'm junior partner in his firm.

Corker. (*Delighted.*) You are? (*Ramming his daughter's hand into SNAPSHOT's.*) Then, if Benjamin Beeswing is your uncle, all I can say is, take her, my boy, she's yours.

Laura. } (*Together.*) What! De-lightful!

Snap. }

Corker. (*Eagerly.*) Why, Benjamin Beeswing, by a timely loan, saved me from bankruptcy thirty years ago. To think you should be his nephew!

Matty. (*Who has meanwhile come forward.*) It be main funny. (*Roaring with laughter.*) Ha, ha, ha!

Corker. (*Suddenly turning round on her.*) Oh, it is—is it? Perhaps you'll go and cord your box—

Laura. Nay, papa, allow me to intercede. You were rather cross, you know.

Matty. Lor', sir, you was main cantankerous.

Snap. Just a little touchy, if anything.

Corker. (*Facetiously.*) Well, perhaps I was just a leetle excitable at times; but you'll find I shall improve upon acquaintance.

Snap. Of course you will. (*To audience.*) And if in the meantime anybody should come across a white spot with a black rabbit on his brown forehead, value eighteen pence—

Corker. (*Jovially.*) Eighteen pence! he's worth a thousand pounds! (*To audience.*) If you should come across him, ladies and gentlemen, pack him up carefully, either side upwards, and bring him to Fizzington Corker—you know my address—I shall always be happy to see you—for that peculiarly marked animal has been the means of bringing an excellent son-in-law to—

All. (*In chorus loudly.*) OLD GOOSEBERRY!

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